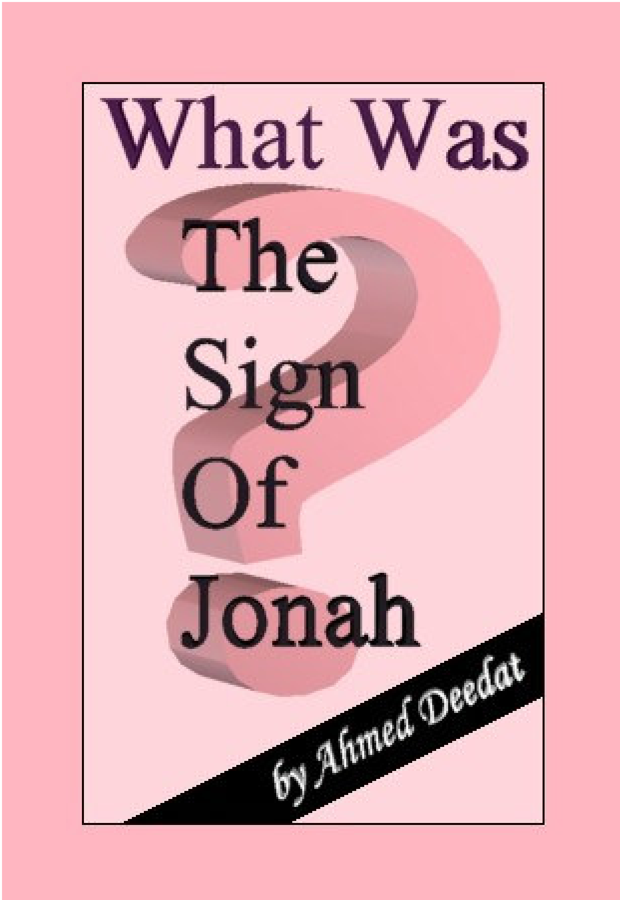

What Was
The
Sign
Of
Jonah
by Ahmed Deedat

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"CHRIST" NOT A NAME

Over a thousand million Christians today blindly accept that Jesus of Nazareth is the **Christ.** They produce "a thousand and one" prophecies from the Jewish Bible (the Old Testament) to prove their claim that Jesus was the Messiah promised to the Jews. Let us hold the "thousand" prophecies in abeyance for a moment and examine the only unequivocal claim made by Jesus in the Gospels and examine whether he fulfilled his promise to the Jews.

We must admit that the word CHRIST is not a name. It is a **title.** It is a translation of the Hebrew word **Messiah,** meaning "anointed." The Greek word for "anointed" is **Christos** from which we get the word Christ.

Priests and kings were "anointed" when being consecrated to their office. The Holy Bible confers this title even on a **heathen king** CYRUS (Isaiah 45:1).

We are reminded in the Gospel of St. Luke that "WHEN EIGHT DAYS WERE ACCOMPLISHED FOR THE CIRCUMCISING OF THE CHILD, HIS NAME WAS CALLED **JESUS,** WHICH WAS SO NAMED OF THE ANGEL BEFORE HE WAS CONCEIVED IN THE WOMB." (Luke 2:21). The name that was given to Mary for her yet unborn son was **JESUS** and **NOT** Christ. It was only after his baptism at the hands of John the Baptist that he, Jesus, claimed to be the Christ. The Jews were not the ones to accept his claim on its face value. **They wanted proof!**

MIRACLE AS PROOF

Matthew records that the learned men among the Jews - the Scribes and Pharisees - came to Jesus and asked, **"MASTER, WE WOULD SEE A SIGN FROM THEE".** (Matthew 12:38). What they really wanted was some "magic trick," some "sleight of hand" like producing a rabbit out of a hat or walking on the water or flying in the air or trodding on burning coal. This is the type of "sign" or MIRACLE they were looking for. The Jews mistook him for a sorcerer, a wizard, a charlatan.

NO "SIGN" BUT ONE

With righteous indignation Jesus replies: **"AN EVIL AND ADULTEROUS GENERATION SEEKETH AFTER A SIGN; AND THERE SHALL NO SIGN** (no miracle) **BE GIVEN TO IT, BUT THE SIGN** (miracle) **OF THE**

PROPHET JONAS: FOR AS JONAS WAS THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS IN THE WHALE'S BELLY; SO SHALL THE SON OF MAN BE THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS IN THE HEART OF THE EARTH." (Matthew 12:39-40). Jesus says, "NO SIGN." He does not refer the Jews to blind Bartimeus whose sight he had restored. He does not speak about the "woman with issues" who was healed by merely touching him; or about the 2000 pigs he had destroyed to heal "a man possessed;" or the 5000 and the 3000 people he had fed and satiated with a few pieces of fish and a few pieces of bread. '**No sign,"** says Jesus, BUT ONE! - **"THE SIGN OF THE PROPHET JONAS!"** He is putting all his "eggs" in one basket. His claim to being the Messiah (Christ) stands or falls by the ONLY **"sign"** he was prepared to give.

Did Jesus fulfil the only sign he gave? Christendom answers with a unanimous **Y-E-S!** without heeding the Biblical advice - **'not to take things for granted.'** - **but** "PROVE ALL THINGS!" (1 Thessalonians 5:21)

JONAH FLEES HIS CALL

What was the **"sign"** (miracle) of Jonah? We have to go to the **"Book of Jonah"** in the Old Testament to find out. God commanded Jonah to go to Nineveh and warn the Ninevites to repent from their **"evil ways, and from the violence that is in their hands."** (Jonah 3:8) But Jonah was loath to go as a warner unto the Ninevites, so he goes to Joppa instead of Nineveh, and takes a boat to run away from the Lord's command.

While at sea, there was a terrible tempest. According to the

superstition of the mariners, a person fleeing from his Master's command creates such a turmoil at sea. They began to enquire among themselves and said, **"COME, AND LET US CAST LOTS,** (like the tossing of a coin, **"head"** or **"tail"**) **THAT WE MAY KNOW FOR WHOSE CAUSE THIS EVIL IS UPON US. SO THEY CAST LOTS, AND THE LOT FELL UPON JONAH."** (Jonah 1:7) Though there was a temporary lapse on the part of Jonah in fulfilling his mission, he manfully and most courageously volunteers: **"AND HE SAID UNTO THEM TAKE ME UP, AND CAST ME FORTH INTO THE SEA; SO SHALL THE SEA BE CALM UNTO YOU: FOR I KNOW THAT FOR MY SAKE THIS GREAT TEMPEST IS UPON YOU."** (Jonah 1:12)

DEAD OR ALIVE?

Since Jonah was selflessly offering himself as a **"vicarious"** sacrifice there

was no need for strangling him before throwing him into the sea, no need to spear him or break his arm or limb. In his own words: **"TAKE ME UP AND CAST ME FORTH."** The question now arises, that when the shipmaster and the crew threw him overboard, was Jonah **dead** or **alive?** Any Christian child who has attended Sunday School will give an immediate reply: **"ALIVE!"** The storm subsides. Was this perhaps a coincidence? A fish swallows Jonah. Was he **dead** or **alive** when swallowed? The answer again is **"ALIVE."** Was he **dead** or **alive** when **"JONAH PRAYED UNTO THE LORD HIS GOD OUT OF THE FISH'S BELLY?"** (Jonah 2:1)

Surely **dead** men don't cry and don't pray! The answer again is **"ALIVE."** For three days and three nights the fish takes him around the ocean: **dead** or **alive?** **"ALIVE!"** is the answer. On the third day it vomits him on the seashore: **dead** or **alive? A-L-I-V-E,** of

course! What had Jesus prophesied about himself? He said: **"AS JONAH WAS ..... SO SHALL THE SON OF MAN BE" "soos Jonah" - "njenga Jonah"** - LIKE JONAH. And how was Jonah? Was he **dead** or **alive** for three days and three nights? **Alive!** ALIVE! **ALIVE!** is the unanimous answer from the Jew, the Christian and the Muslim!

UNLIKE JONAH

If Jonah was alive for three days and three nights, then Jesus also ought to have been **alive** in the tomb as he himself had foretold! But Christianity hangs on the flimsy thread of the **"death"** of Jesus for its salvation. So it has to answer that Jesus was **DEAD** for three days and three nights. The contradiction between his utterance and its fulfilment is obvious. Jonah **ALIVE,** Jesus **DEAD!** Very UNLIKE Jonah! Jesus had said **"LIKE Jonah"** not **UNLIKE** Jonah. If this is true then

according to his own test Jesus is not the **TRUE** Messiah of the Jews. If the Gospel record is genuine then how can we blame the Jews for rejecting "CHRIST."

THREE AND THREE = 72 HOURS?

The Doctor of Divinity and the Professor of Theology replies that in Matthew 12:40 under discussion, the emphasis is on the TIME factor - **"as Jonas was THREE days and THREE nights in the belly of the whale, so shall the son of man be THREE days and THREE nights in the heart of the earth."** "Please note," says the learned theologian, "that the word **"THREE"** is repeated **F-O-U-R** times in this verse to prove that Jesus was going to fulfil the prophecy as regards the **length of time** he was going to remain in the tomb, and NOT **'As Jonas was'** in relation to his being **alive** or **dead.**

If it is the time factor that Jesus was stressing then let us ask whether he fulfilled that aspect of his promise to the Jews as well. The Christian dogmatist answers: **"OF COURSE!"**

PUBLIC HOLIDAY

The question arises: when was Christ crucified? The whole Christian world answers: **"FRIDAY!"** Is this the reason we celebrate **"Good Friday"** - "Gooi-Vrydag" - as a Public Holiday in the Republic of South Africa? And every Christian nation from America to Zambia, from Abyssinia to Zaire have a Public Holiday on the **"FRIDAY"** at Easter. What makes **"Good Friday"** so good? "It is the death of Christ on the Cross on this day to wash off our sins," says the Christians. So he was killed on the cross on a Friday, 1950 years ago? "YES!" says the Christians.

From the Gospel records we gather that the Jews were in a hurry to eliminate Jesus. Hence the midnight trial, and then despatching him off to Pilate in the morning; from Pilate to Herod and then back again to Pilate. The vested interests were afraid of the general public. Jesus was their hero. He had been their benefactor. His enemies had to do away with him quickly, and succeeded in doing so. However, as much as they were in a hurry to hang him on the cross, they were in equal hurry to bring him down from the cross before sunset on Friday because of the Sabbath. The Sabbath starts at about 6 p.m. on Friday and the Jews were warned in Deuteronomy 21:23 that the victim of crucifixion was an **"accursed of God"** and was not to be permitted to remain hanging on the Sabbath day, **"that thy land be not defiled which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance."**

To satisfy the religious scruples of the Scribes and Pharisees the **"secret disciples"** of Jesus took down the body from the cross. They gave the body the Jewish burial-bath, plastered it with **"one hundred pounds weight of aloes and myrrh"** (John 19:39), then placed the shrouded body into the sepulchre before night-fall.

WHY "SUPPOSED"?

There are numerous differences between the various sects and denominations of Christianity, but on the above they are unanimous. Jesus is **SUPPOSED** to be in the tomb on the **night** of Friday. He is still **SUPPOSED to be in the tomb on the day** of Saturday. He is still **SUPPOSED** to be in the tomb on the **night** of Saturday. Christians agree whole-heartedly with this. It will be noted that I have repeated the word **'SUPPOSED'** three times. The reason is that the Gospels

are silent as to when exactly Jesus came out of the tomb. He could have been taken away on Friday night by his **"secret disciples"** to a more congenial and restful place, but I have no right to assume about what the Gospel writers are silent. I have, therefore, repeated the word **'SUPPOSED'** three times.

In the final analysis, let us see whether Jesus was **THREE** days and **THREE** niqhts in the tomb:-

EASTER WEEK	IN THE SEPULCHRE	
	DAYS	NIGHTS
FRIDAY Placed in tomb just before sunset.	— nil —	One Night
SATURDAY Supposed to be in tomb.	One Day	One Night
SUNDAY Missing before sunrise.	— nil —	— nil —
TOTAL	One Day	Two Nights

You will no doubt note that the **GRAND TOTAL** is **ONE** day and **TWO** nights, and NOT **three** days and

three nights. According to the Christian Scriptures Jesus had failed a SECOND time. **FIRST** he was unlike Jonah, who was **ALIVE** in the belly of the fish, which is the exact opposite of what the Christians claim had happened to their master Jesus, who was **DEAD** for the same period of time as Jonah was - **ALIVE.**

SECONDLY, we discover that he also failed to fulfil the **TIME FACTOR** as well. The greatest mathematician in Christendom will fail to obtain the desired result - **THREE** days and **THREE** nights. We must not forget that the Gospels are explicit in telling us that it was **"before sunrise"** on Sunday morning (the **FIRST** day of the week), that Mary Magdalene went to the tomb of Jesus and found it empty.

"GOOD" WEDNESDAY

The Armstrong family has debunked the whole Christian world. They seem

to know their arithmetic! Mr Robert Fahey of the **"Plain Truth"** magazine, delivered a lecture recently at the "Holiday Inn," Durban, where I was present. Mr Fahey attempted to prove to his Christian audience that Jesus Christ was crucified on a **Wednesday** and not on Friday, as is supposed by Orthodox Christianity for the past two thousand years. According to him if one counts backwards from Sunday morning deducting 3 DAYS and 3 NIGHTS, one ought to get **WEDNESDAY** as the answer.

I congratulated Mr Fahey for his ingenuity. I asked him, how was it possible for the past two thousand years the whole Christian world celebrated **GOOD FRIDAY** instead of **GOOD WEDNESDAY.** Thus the 1,200,000,000 Christians of the world today are ignorant of the correct day of the so called crucifixion! It means that even the Roman Catholic Church

- which claims an unbroken chain of Popes from Peter to this day - according to Mr Fahey are mislead.

GOD OR THE DEVIL?

The question arises, who deceived the millions of Christians for the past TWO THOUSAND years. **GOD** or the **DEVIL?** Mr Fahey categorically answered: **"THE DEVIL!"**

"If the devil," I said, "can succeed in confusing the Christians in the most elementary things of their Faith, whether to celebrate a Good Friday or a Good Wednesday, then how much easier for him to mislead Christians in other things concerning God?" Mr Fahey blushed and walked away.

If this is the belief of the trend-setters of the Christian Faith in the world today, may we not then ask: is this not the mightiest hoax in history?

What was the Sign of Jonah?

